

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application.

Listing of the Claims:

72. (Previously presented) In a method for automatically staining a biological sample, the biological sample being on a support medium and substantially covered by a first aqueous solution, and an evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase covering the first aqueous solution, the improvement comprising:

- a) dispensing a reagent onto the evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase; and
- b) sending at least one stream of air to a surface of the evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase to move the evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase, thereby stirring the reagent with the biological sample on the support medium while preserving the biological sample from dehydration from the stream of air.

77. (Previously presented) The method of claim 72, wherein said biological sample comprises tissue.

80. (Previously presented) The method of claim 72, wherein the stream of air is directed to an area on the surface of the evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase between a center of the evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase and an edge of the support medium.

81. (Previously presented) The method of claim 80, wherein the at least one gas stream moves the reagent in a circular path.

82. (Previously presented) The method of claim 72, wherein two streams are applied; and wherein the two streams are applied in opposite directions.

83. (Previously presented) The method of claim 72, wherein two streams are applied;

wherein the first stream is directed against a first area of the surface of the evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase between a center of the evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase and a first edge of the support medium; and

wherein the second stream is directed against a second area of the evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase between the center of the second solution and a second edge of the support medium.

84. (Previously presented) The method of claim 72, wherein stirring said evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase comprises directing at least one stream of air at an angle to the surface of said evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase and maintaining it long enough to cause a rotation of the evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase.

85. (Previously presented) The method of claim 84, wherein stirring said evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase comprises creating a vortex in the evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase.

87. (Previously presented) The method of claim 72, wherein the step of sending the stream of air causes kinetic motion to be transferred into said first aqueous solution.

89. (Previously presented) The method of claim 87, wherein said biological sample comprises polynucleic acid molecules.

90. (Previously presented) The method of claim 87, wherein said support medium is a glass microscope slide.

91. (Previously presented) The method of claim 87, wherein said evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase is a hydrocarbon having from about 9 to about 18 carbon atoms.

98. (Previously presented) The method of claim 72, wherein the step of stirring the evaporation-inhibiting liquid phase accelerates rate of dispersal of reagent to the biological sample covered by the aqueous solution.

99. (Previously presented) The method of claim 72, wherein the support medium is a slide.